

Rainbow Reveille

June 2005

Volume 1, Issue 4

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1-128
trains IA



NEVER
FORGET

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An Iraqi army soldier places a tourniquet on one of his squad members May 12 during a training exercise at Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Balad, Iraq. The IA soldiers are receiving real-world training from Task Force 1-128 Soldiers. (Photo by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson/22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



es during a training exercise
army soldiers are receiving
128 at FOB O'Ryan. (Photo
Detachment)



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Seeing growth in Iraqi counterparts

Midway through 2005, we can be proud of the accomplishments of Task Force Liberty and still look ahead to a challenging second half as the country of Iraq prepares its new constitution, referendum vote and elections for a new permanent government.

June commemorates one year since the end of Iraq's occupation and provides a good opportunity to see how far our progress towards full Iraqi control and responsibility for their future has taken Task Force Liberty.

Military transitions have been apparent throughout our area of operations. With transition teams operating with our Iraqi army partners, we can see real growth and progress in the formations of our Iraqi army battalions in the field.

Iraqi soldiers from the Diyala Province completed multiple brigade-sized operations with the 2nd Brigade headquarters of the 5th Division leading their forces in cordon and search operations near Baqubah and Buhriz to uncover weapons caches and kill or capture terrorists in their area.

Company operations in Salah Ad Din are frequently led by aggressive and proud Iraqi commanders. From



Maj. Gen. Joseph J. Taluto

Bayji through Tikrit to Samarra, more and more operations in the field see Iraqi commanders leading their own soldiers.

Task Force Liberty transferred military operations to the 4th Iraqi Army Division's 3rd Brigade this month. The province of As Sulayminayah has been returned to provincial control as Iraqi soldiers, police and border enforcement officers take the lead in their security operations throughout the province.

In Kirkuk Province, two forward

operating bases have been closed while a third has been transferred to the Iraqi army forces. Task Force Liberty Soldiers continue to operate in the region, but allow Iraqi soldiers to lead the way for operations in their area.

There can be no doubt that we are moving the ball downfield. We see this in the growing confidence and aggressive spirit in our Iraqi partners. We continue to make progress towards transfer of responsibility for combat missions and transfer of bases to Iraqi forces.

Sadly, we can also see our success in the renewed enemy attacks against Iraqi civilians and security forces. The terrorists' recent use of suicide car bomb attacks fail to halt our irreversible momentum. The Iraqi people recognize these murderers for who they are and continue their efforts to support their new government and heroic police and army forces.

Together, we will continue to diminish the enemy's ability to spread violence and intimidation throughout AO Liberty.

NEVER FORGET!

Liberty 6

We are establishing Iraq's foundation

It has been more than 100 days since Task Force Liberty conducted its transfer of authority on Feb. 14, 2005. Although many of our separate units completed their relief in place and transfer before and after that date, one thing we all have in common is the true 'team' and 'force for good' we have become.

We can all be proud of what we are accomplishing. Establishing the foundation for which the Iraqi people will build on to enjoy the freedoms we have always known is a valiant cause. The Soldiers of this task force are out every day performing the multitude of missions and tasks that, if taken as a whole, may appear overwhelming. From developing, training, equipping and fighting along side the new Iraqi army, to assisting with infrastructure improvements and repair to include power and clean water. We are assisting



Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Fearnside

local governments in developing the tools necessary to provide for their people. We are doing our part to bring democracy to Iraq and we will not fail. A free and democratic Iraq

means a safer United States. We are well on the way to realizing that.

I encourage leaders to talk to your Soldiers about what we are undertaking and accomplishing. Keep all Soldiers informed on how Task Force Liberty is succeeding in the execution of our many diverse missions. Share with your Soldiers the impact their contributions have made locally as well on the greater War on Terrorism. This knowledge will keep them motivated and help bring into focus the great things we stand for.

Task Force Liberty still has many long days and nights ahead. We have lost great Soldiers in this noble effort. The best way I know to honor our fallen comrades is to persevere in everything we do and execute our missions in a professional, safe manner.

Rainbow, Never Forget.

Liberty 7

LIBERTY

Country music star performs in Iraq

'Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue'

Story by Staff Sgt. Duane M. Brown
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DANGER, TIKRIT, Iraq – Toby Keith, one of country music's biggest stars took his show beyond the road, traveling halfway around the world to show his support for U.S. Soldiers.

Keith visited and performed for Soldiers here May 16.

Traveling via the United Service Organizations, Keith sang a medley of his country hits including "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)" and "Beer for My Horses."

Before the show, Keith took time to greet Soldiers, sign autographs and pose for pictures.

"I think it's great that he is here doing something for the Soldiers," said Spc. Timothy D. Muckle, chaplain's assistant, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 141st Field Artillery.

When Muckle's turn came to meet Keith, he was stunned by Keith's words.

"I am honored to shake your hand," Keith said.

Keith embraced each Soldier he met as though they were a relative he hadn't seen in years, and the Soldiers responded in kind.

"This is great for the morale of Soldiers because being here in the desert can wear you down day after day," Muckle said. "But when something like this happens, it's a definite break from the regular day-to-day routine."



Photos by Sgt. Teresa R. Coble/22nd MPAD
Singer Toby Keith signs a hat for a Soldier before a May 16 concert in Tikrit, Iraq.



A member of Toby Keith's band plays the guitar during a concert in Tikrit, Iraq.

To some, seeing a concert in the middle of the desert is both funny and fortunate.

"This is cool because I probably wouldn't be able to see Toby Keith this easily in the U.S.," Muckle said.

Keith's musical performance was special because of what country music brings to the table.

"Country music has a solid foundation in American history; through its words, it translates where we come from," said Staff Sgt. Burl Sprouse, band leader for the 42nd Infantry Division "Sonic Front" show band. "So many songs are written for the American Soldier and the regular working man."

He said he felt Toby Keith personalizes his songs so they into words military men and women can relate too. Because of his words, it's as if he is going through it.

"Through his songs, he not only touches on the good things in life, but the hardships endured by Soldiers and their families while deployed away from home defending their country," Sprouse said.

When asked what he feels in his heart when he is surrounded by so many American Soldiers, Keith's answer was simple. "Brother, it's about love man. That's it."



Country music singer Toby Keith performs May 16 for Soldiers deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom III at Forward Operating Base Danger, Tikrit, Iraq.

Wanted

terrorist leader surrenders to Iraqi Army

Story by Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta
42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DANGER, Tikrit, Iraq – Pressure from Iraqi Army and Task Force Liberty units operating near Bayji led to the surrender of wanted Iraqi terrorist Nabil Badriyah Al Nasiri, according to Capt. Hussein Ali Suleman, commander of Company C, 1st Iraqi Army Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Division.

Badriyah, who is from Bayji, surrendered to the 201st Iraqi Army Battalion in Tikrit May 2. He is suspected of being a terrorist cell leader responsible for recent vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attacks against Iraqi police, and other terrorist activities designed to undermine stability in and around Bayji, Tikrit and Samarra.

Badriyah reportedly admitted that he felt compelled to give himself up because of pressure from Iraqi army and Task Force Liberty units.

Badriyah “found himself in a tight circle,” Hussein explained, because of the intense, intelligence-driven manhunt for him by Company C, 201st Iraqi Army Battalion, and Task Force Dragoon. Task Force Dragoon is part of Task Force Liberty’s 1st Brigade Combat Team, operating in the northern part of Salah Ad Din Province since January.

“We’ve been hunting for him since we got here,” said Lt.

Col. Philip Logan, Task Force Dragoon commander. “It started to turn for us when we conducted a series of raids in Bayji and picked up some of his bodyguards.”

Task Force Dragoon and Company C, 201st Iraqi Army Battalion, had been “closing the noose” on Badriyah, Logan said, and that the arrest of his bodyguards and breakup of area terrorist cells had “reduced his ability to maneuver.”

Captain Hussein likened the manhunt, which included a series of raids on Badriyah’s sanctuaries and arrest of his other associates, as a “stranglehold” on Badriyah.

“What led up to that [surrender] was very hard work by Iraqi army and American Soldiers to put the pieces of the puzzle together,” Logan said. He added that Badriyah’s unconditional surrender sends a message that the Iraqi army and

Coalition forces do not negotiate with terrorists.

Both Hussein and Logan said aggressive patrolling and implementing traffic control points by their units also played a part in Badriyah’s surrender.

Task Force Dragoon and Company C, 201st Iraqi Army Battalion, operate near Bayji from Forward Operating Base Summerall. Task Force Dragoon’s sector, which includes Bayji, is 7,000 square kilometers, Logan said - larger than the state of Delaware, and the biggest sector in Task Force Liberty’s area of operations.

“We’re a motorized infantry task force made up primarily of Pennsylvania National Guard Soldiers,” Logan said.

In addition to conducting missions, Company C, 201st Iraqi Army Battalion, is receiving continuous training from Task Force Dragoon Soldiers.

“Tactically they’re operating at a platoon level,” Logan said. “They are able to work with my platoons on operations such as traffic control points, dismounted and mounted patrols, raids and cordons and searches.”

Iraqi soldiers will be conducting company-level operations by summer, Logan predicted.

“When they begin to work at company level, they’ll have their own sector they’ll be responsible for,” he said.

“I believe my soldiers to be brave and strong,” Hussein said. “They are not afraid of dying. We are ready to take on any mission.” Badriyah was transported to a Coalition Forces detention facility. Their hunt for other terrorists continues, Hussein added.

“Everywhere we go, we will capture terrorists,” he said. “When I took command, I told my soldiers ‘if I don’t catch Badriyah, I am a loser.’ This is my war. I will win.”

“What led up to that (surrender) was very hard work by Iraqi army and American Soldiers to put the pieces of the puzzle together.”

***Lt. Col. Philip Logan
 Commander
 Task Force Dragoon***



Soldiers watch for insurgents from a distance

Story, photos by Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT Public Affairs

MAIN SUPPLY ROUTE TAMPA, Iraq – One of the most effective weapons used by insurgents against Coalition Forces is the improvised explosive device. IEDs are usually placed along the roadside and detonated when a convoy passes.

Soldiers are constantly patrolling the roadways of Iraq. One of the counter-insurgency methods they have begun to employ is to set up observation points to watch the highways for insurgents attempting to set up IEDs.

“Our intent is to kill or capture insurgents placing IEDs on (main supply route) Tampa,” said Capt. Ralph Elder, commander of Troop B, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment. “Our secondary intent is to identify insurgent cells in our area.”

The way the Soldiers accomplish this task is by patrolling the immediate off-road area where an IED had been placed.

A lot of times when a convoy passes through, insurgents come up behind them and set up IEDs, said Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Bush, a 5/7 Cav. platoon sergeant. “We set up the OPs to watch for that kind of activity.”

“We walk in the areas where IEDs have previously gone off and look at the terrain features,” Elder said. “We then set up OPs out of the field of vision from Tampa. Many of the OPs that I have seen pretty much sit on the road. That isn’t really an OP to me, that is just denying the enemy movement. Our guys stay hidden and watch the route. If someone drops an IED, we will see them before they see us.”

The Soldiers not only set up patrols off road, but watch it from places where they have a good view of the highway.

“We set up an OP at an old base that was used by the guys before us,” Bush said. “It is a good OP because you can see pretty far up and down MSR Tampa. Insurgents have been using that stretch of highway to set up IEDs.”

The Soldiers teamed up with Iraqi army elements to help them accomplish this task. Teaching the IA how to conduct these types of operations is part of handing over the responsibility of security



Private 1st Class Mitch Shelton, a 5th Battalion dismount gunner keeps an eye on main supply route Tampa from an observation point near the highway. The Soldiers watch for vehicles stopping along the roadway whose passengers may set up IEDs when they stop.

to them.

“We linked up with the IA on this patrol,” Bush said. “They are doing pretty much the same thing we are. We are trying to bring

them along on missions like this so they can be ready to take over when we move out. We are showing them the ropes. Right now, we are pretty much the main force, and they are supporting us. We want to make the transition to where they are the main force and we support them.”

“It is important for the IA to be with us and learn how to properly do patrols,” said Sgt Shannon Garstka, a 5/7 Cav. team leader.

“By coming with us, they learn the correct way to catch terrorists.”

Bush said his guys were new at this kind of thing when they first got to Iraq, but they have improved greatly through constant patrolling.

“I am satisfied with their performance,” Bush said. “My guys are doing a great job. A lot of the guys are in different positions than they were back in the rear. They are a lot better than they were a few months ago.”



Sergeant Shannon Garstka (left), a 5th Battalion team leader, and Pfc. Mitch Shelton, a 5/7 Cav. dismount gunner, patrol terrain beside main supply route Tampa May 3.

Coalition, Iraqi soldiers distrib

Story, photos by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, Balad, Iraq – Soldiers from Task Force 1-128 and the Iraqi army took a day off from their normal security patrols and handed out school supplies, clothes and shoes to the Iraqi populace in a few small villages during a combat patrol near Balad, Iraq, May 19.

"It is kind of sad to see kids running around with no shoes or half the kids you see don't wear shirts or have pants on and they're all dirty," said Pvt. Adam Rodriguez, 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment. "It's stuff you never see back home, so it feels good to help them out."

Task Force 1-128 is comprised of Headquarters and Headquarters Company and Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment,

from the Wisconsin Army National Guard and Troop K, 3rd Battalion, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, from the Tennessee Army National Guard.

The Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, along with the 4th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Division of the Iraqi army, distributed more than 60 boxes of goods containing more than 100 pairs of shoes, assorted clothes and hundreds of pounds of school supplies such as pens, pencils, notebooks and paper to children and families in the villages of Albouhaswa, Ahmed Hajam, and Ja'afaral Jalaby.

"We tried to go to villages in the low-lying areas that aren't used to the Coalition Forces being around," said Sgt. 1st Class Craig Bailey, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment. "You could clearly see when we were giving them the gifts they were shocked, surprised and happy. I heard one woman remark 'thank you Allah' for the gifts."

Having soldiers from the Iraqi army alongside while passing out the supplies helped to build a relationship between the people and



Private Adam Rodriguez, Company C, Task Force 1-128, hands out notebooks and pencils to two Iraqi children May 19. Company C distributed more than 60 boxes of school supplies, shoes and miscellaneous clothing in towns near Balad, Iraq.



During a joint patrol with Company C, Task Force 1-128, soldiers distributed supplies to children in a village near Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Iraq, May 19.



Private Adam Rodriguez, Company C, Task Force 1-128 hands out a stuffed animal and shoes to an Iraqi child May 19.

oute school supplies, clothing



Force 1-128, Iraqi army soldiers from 4th Battalion, 1st Brigade, distribute school supplies to Base O'Ryan, Balad, Iraq. Company C has received hundreds of boxes of donated supplies.

their army as the Iraqis look to build a new country based on democracy.

"What was important about this mission was it was a joint mission with the Iraqis," said Sgt. Edward Johnson, 2nd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment. "The Iraqi army



Sergeant 1st Class Craig Bailey, Company C, gives a pair of shoes to an Iraqi child.

seems very excited by the prospect of a brighter future for this country. Anything we can do to help them in learning how to fight, but also learning how to take care of their own people, is well worth the effort."

Soldiers from Company C started writing home asking for donations to distribute to the Iraqi people when they arrived at Forward Operating Base O'Ryan in December and have been taken aback by how much they have received in six months.

"I've been pleasantly surprised by the amount of support we've received from the American population at large back home," said Johnson. "We literally have received hundreds of boxes and care packages from churches, schools, veteran's organizations, Boy Scouts and a variety of other individual citizens."

Some packages came from military installations overseas and from people and companies the Soldiers hadn't even solicited.

"The Boy Scouts of Japan sent us more than 40 boxes of school supplies, as they literally cleaned out the whole post exchange at Camp Zama and Yakota Air Base of school supplies. Some company in Wisconsin, without us even asking, sent like 40 or 50 boxes of brand new shoes, backpacks, school supplies and so on," added Johnson, who lives and works at Camp Zama, Japan, but is a native of Hinkley, Minn.

The Soldiers hope to have more opportunities to dispense needed goods as they only passed out a quarter of the boxes they have.

"The children are the future of this country and if we can plant some real positive seeds with them it will pay off in dividends for us," said Johnson.



An Iraqi soldier with 4th Battalion, passes out donated goods to Iraqi children May 19 in a town near Balad, Iraq.

Iraqi army soldiers receive tra

Story, photos

by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, Balad, Iraq – Coalition Soldiers are working around the clock to make sure their Iraqi counterparts are ready and capable of protecting Iraq and its citizens.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, stationed at Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Iraq, are helping the country's soldiers transition into overseeing the missions being conducted in their area of operations.

At the Iraqi army training facility here the soldiers are taught how to set up traffic control points, identify improvised explosive devices and vehicle-borne IEDs, conduct personnel searches, distinguish be-

tween insurgents and civilians, and how to react to enemy contact.

Task Force 1-128 Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, Wisconsin Army National Guard, and Troop K, 3rd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Tennessee Army National Guard, conduct the training.

The Iraqi army soldiers are doing well with their training said Staff Sgt. John Macullouch, an instructor with Troop K.

"I don't feel that they will have any problems taking over the area," said Macullouch. "We have spent a lot of hours with these guys."

The Iraqi army is young, but with the proper training it will grow into an army well capable of defending its own country, he said.

"Their soldiers are kind of like a fledgling eagle, and we ourselves are representative of a full grown eagle that represents freedom," he said. "We have to take them under our wing right now and teach them how to protect this country in the same manner that we would protect it."

Sergeant Chad Stellflug, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, said the instructors try to develop a small group of trainees at a time in hopes that they will be more effective when joining a larger unit.

"If you have four squared-away squads, then you are going to have a squared-away platoon," Stellflug said. "So we break down the training. We start small, and work big. It takes a little bit (of work), but if you get them squared away, they are going to be tough."

Sergeant Shaun Dekok, a medical ser-

geant and instructor with 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, said they push the soldiers in order to make sure they are prepared to face whatever obstacles that might come before them when the Task Force Liberty Soldiers return home.

"When the (Coaliton) leaves Iraq, not all of the country's problems will be solved and we want to make sure they are ready when the time comes," Dekok said.

The Iraqi army first lieutenant in charge of the 4th Platoon soldiers that are currently going through the training said he feels his men have become well-rounded soldiers and will be able to conduct the task at hand thanks to the Coalition Soldiers who are training them.

"As an Iraqi army officer I feel with great feeling and hope that all the Iraqi army gets trained by the Coalition Forces," he said. "They train us very well."

He said the improvement in the Iraqi security forces' abilities can be seen through the reducing numbers of Iraqi service members who have been killed in action.

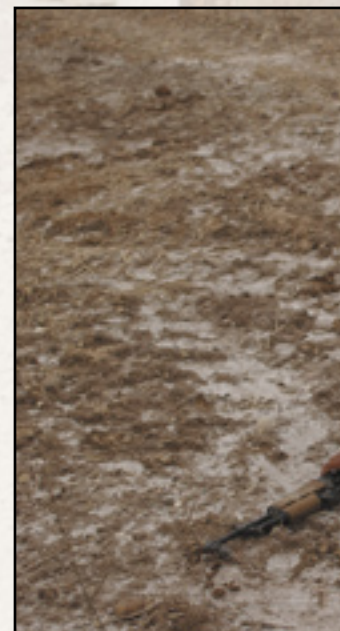
"(Because of) the training that we receive, we can say that we are prepared and can manage the whole thing after the (Coalition) leaves Iraq," he said. "Since we started working with the Army we have lost a lot of our soldiers from the Iraqi army and the Iraqi police, but as we got trained well and we became more progressed and more developed, we have reduced our losses to the minimum level."

Sergeant Matthew W. Kuhnert, a Iraqi army instructor with Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, and a native of Columbus, Wis., agrees with the lieutenant



An Iraqi army soldier patrols through the streets at Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Balad, Iraq, during a realistic training scenario conducted by Soldiers from Task Force 1-128.

An Iraqi ar



An Iraqi army soldier drags on a training exercise. The IA so

ining from Coalition Forces



Army soldier takes cover during a simulated fire fight. Iraqi soldiers are participating in a training exercise conducted by Task Force 1-128.

about the soldiers' improvement since they began working together.

"We have come a long way with them as far as doctrine, training them how to react

as a group, think as a group, work as a team and all those things come down to discipline," Kuhnert said. "We are just teaching these guys how to function as a team and look out for each other, so that on the battlefield they function as a team."

Stellpflug said the job they do with the Iraqi soldiers is a vital step in the country's ability to stand on its own.

"This training is important for Iraq as a whole," Stellpflug said. "It shows a lot of character in the guys. When we first got here the IA soldiers were afraid to even put the uniform on. Now they are coming together as a whole. More and more Iraqis are ready to take the challenge and (this training plays) a vital role in getting Iraq stable."



One of his squad members with a simulated leg injury to cover during training. Iraqi soldiers are receiving training from Task Force 1-128 Soldiers.



Iraqi army solidiers use hand and arm signals to stop marching before conducting a training exercise May 12.

Iraqi army soliders watch, learn from Task Force 1-128

Story, photos by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, Balad, Iraq – Coalition Soldiers from Task Force Liberty's 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, conducted a joint operation with Iraqi army soldiers near Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Balad, Iraq, May 14, in order to monitor the Iraqi army soldiers' improvements and provide them with some operational experience.

While out on the patrol the Iraqi Soldiers from 4th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Division, Iraqi army, observed the Task Force 1-128 Soldiers and participated in a variety of missions throughout the day.

Task Force 1-128 is composed of Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, Wisconsin Army National Guard, and Troop K, 3rd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Tennessee Army National Guard, who are actively working to train and prepare the Iraqi army to take control of military operations in Iraq.

Before the Iraqi army soldiers go out on missions, the Coalition Soldiers and Iraqi army leaders, make sure they have all of their equipment and that it is functioning properly, said Spc. Scott Turk, a combat medic with Company A, Task Force 1-128, and a native of Prairie Du Sac, Wis.

"What we are doing is some on the spot corrections," Turk said. "If we see something that is not right we will tell them 'Hey, you shouldn't do this, because it could actually injure one of your guys.' or 'If you do it this way it will make things a lot easier and it will make your guys more combat ready.'"

The Coalition Soldiers always hold the Iraqi soldiers to high standards, said Sgt. 1st Class Todd Kuchelmeister, platoon sergeant for 2nd Platoon, Company A, TF 1-128, and native of Milwaukee, Wis.

"We try to hold them to our standards," Kuchelmeister. "When



A Task Force 1-128 Soldier observes an Iraqi army soldier inspecting a vehicle May 14 at a traffic control point near Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Balad, Iraq.

we first started doing this they would come up to us and saying, 'We need water. We need food,' and we had to start saying, 'No this is part of your (pre-combat checks) and (pre-combat inspections).'"

The Iraqi soldiers, however, do not take their missions lightly, said Cpl. Michael Geiger, a team leader for 1st Squad, 2nd Platoon, Company A, and native of Deer River, Minn.

"They are taking it really seriously," said Geiger. "They see us taking our job seriously, so they do the same thing. I think they will be ready to take over when the time comes. We are just going to take it slow though and make sure they have everything they need to do the job."

Walking patrols through the small city they visited named Fifty Dar, near Balad, will soon become solely the responsibility of the Iraqi army, Kuchelmeister said.

During this visit to the town, the soldiers provided funds for a school in need of improvements, checked on a water treatment facility and looked in on a young girl and elderly man in need of medical care.

Kuchelmeister said that these missions are important, and bringing the Iraqi soldiers on missions like this allows the locals to see that their country's security forces care about their well being.

"It is important to show that the Iraqi forces are here to help," Kuchelmeister said. "The people (need to) know they are there to assist and help them and they are not going to be against them."

Before returning back to base the Iraqi army soldiers set up two traffic control points, where they stopped local traffic and checked for identification and inspected vehicles.

In conducting missions such as this the Iraqi soldiers have proven that they are capable of taking over military operations in Iraq, Turk said.

"At first I was a little apprehensive about training with these guys, but they have actually shown me that they can do their job," he said. "They want to take care of their country and that is why we are here. We are here to train them up, so we can go home."



Specialist Scott Turk, (left) a combat medic with Company A, Task Force 1-128, and a translator conduct a pre-combat inspection of an Iraqi army medic in order to make sure he has all the necessary supplies before a combat patrol May 14.

Troops keep MSR's safe while training Iraqi army

Story, photo by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey
 22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, Balad, Iraq – Convoys roll through Iraq daily never knowing what surprise might lie ahead or be around the next corner.

For the Task Force Liberty Soldiers of Troop K, Task Force 1-128, creating a safe passage along the main supply routes and alternate supply routes while training soldiers of the Iraqi army in and around Balad, Iraq, is an everyday mission.

"We're part of the battalion's main effort doing MSR and ASR clearance of Tampa and Milton," said Staff Sgt. Forrest Bradford, 1st Squad Leader, 2nd Platoon, Troop K, 3rd Battalion, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment. "We go up and down the MSR looking for anything out of the ordinary, making sure the route is clear as possible in this area."

Troop K is part of 3rd Battalion, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, from the Tennessee Army National Guard, but is attached to 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, from the Wisconsin Army National Guard, during Operation Iraqi Freedom III.

The Soldiers know that maintaining a safe roadway is a long and tedious process that requires dedication and time.

"We run no less than five missions a day at a minimum of four hours each," said Capt. Paul W. Shannon, commander, Troop K. "We are on the road 16 to 22 hours a day, so there are usually only two hours a day we don't have someone outside the wire patrolling the MSRs and ASRs."

Since the end of December, Troop K alone has logged 288,007 miles during 814 combat patrols, conducted 40 raids and had no serious vehicular accidents as of April 30, added Shannon, a Clarksville Tenn. native.

In addition to patrolling the supply routes in the area, Troop K is also training soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Division, of the Iraqi army and providing security for the southern border of Logistical Support Area Anaconda.

"We really have three missions," said Shannon. "Our primary mission is route clearance and security of MSRs and ASRs, our second mission is to protect the southern boundaries of LSA Anaconda from mortar attacks, rocket attacks and provide general security, and our third is to train the Iraqi army and Iraqi Security Forces so that they can take over and we can go home."

Troop K has actually been conducting joint patrols with Iraqi army soldiers since December, but just started working with the 4th Battalion within the last month.

"About 90 percent of the patrols we've conducted have been joint patrols where we take out an Iraqi army team," said Staff Sgt. Brian M. VanNote, 3rd Squad Leader, 2nd Platoon, Troop K. "We are seeing with the new unit the level of discipline is better. We've had some really outstanding squads that have run with us."

The Iraqi soldiers have been learning how to conduct mounted and foot patrols as well as how to set up traffic control points, where they search vehicles and passengers and talk to locals to gather information.

"They are very limited due to resources right now, communi-



An Iraqi army soldier with the 4th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Division, talks with an Iraqi child May 11, during a dismounted foot patrol in a town near Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Balad, Iraq.

cation equipment and vehicles, things you really need to have to conduct patrols correctly," said Shannon. "So what we have done is integrated the vehicles they do have, so my patrols will take one to two vehicles of five to 10 soldiers, incorporating them in the patrol."

Even though they lack some resources, the Iraqi soldiers are beginning to conduct some aspects of the patrols on their own.

"We're trying to get hands off during the TCPs. Eventually we'll be there to just provide them security while they conduct the TCPs," said VanNote. "They also help out getting the message across to locals as they have an easier time communicating due to a lack of translators."

Soon after they receive the necessary equipment the Iraqi soldiers will begin to take over patrols on their own for Troop K, providing a secure area for the Iraqi people.

"When they take over, if they have the presence in the area like we've had, there will be no problems," Bradford said.

Coalition Soldiers help improve life for Iraqis

Story, photos

by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, Balad, Iraq – Soldiers from Task Force Liberty are working to improve the way of life for Iraqis near Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Balad, Iraq, while also teaching them to develop reconstruction projects on their own.

Task Force 1-128 is helping local villages to facilitate projects that will aid them in getting clean drinking water, renovating their schools, improving their agriculture and receiving supplies for their medical clinics.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, Wisconsin Army National Guard, and Troop K, 3rd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Tennessee Army National Guard, make up TF 1-128 and are actively working to train and prepare the local Iraqi security forces and government officials to take control of everyday operations in Iraq.

Helping the locals with projects of this nature allows the Iraqis to see that Coalition Soldiers are not here to occupy their country but to assist them in improving their way of life, said Sgt. 1st Class Jean Briggs, a civil affairs team leader with the 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, from Danbury, Conn.

"They have been neglected for 35 years and our job is to show them that we are here to help them and let them know that we are not here to dictate how they run their lives," Briggs said. "The majority of the people seem to realize that we are here to help. I would say 90 percent of them are appreciative and willing to help us help them."

The majority of the projects the Soldiers do are humanitarian in nature and are geared towards Iraq's future, said Capt. Paul Shannon, a native of Clarksville, Tenn., and commander of Troop K.

"The young Iraqi children are the ones who are going to make the future of Iraq a success," he said. "We are talking 10 to 15 years down the road. The education of the ones in the elementary, primary and



Captain. Paul Shannon, a native of Clarksville, Tenn., and commander of Troop K, 3rd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, talks to an Iraqi police officer with the help of a translator in a town near Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Balad, Iraq.

high schools of today... is first and foremost our priority."

Shannon said his Soldiers are not conducting large reconstruction projects; they are just trying to improve the villages a little bit at a time.

"It is not much," he said. "I am not building entire schools at this point. I am just basically fixing roofs that leak, providing fresh water tanks for the children, small things of that nature."

The Task Force's Soldiers have been helping improve a water treatment plant, the roof of a school and local clinics, but soon they will be turning these types of missions over to the

city council and local security forces, Shannon said.

"I keep telling them my time here is limited," Shannon said. "They need to take advantage of it and help me facilitate these projects and work with us to learn how a government is supposed to work, so when I am gone they are able to facilitate their own projects."

Because Iraqi officials will be taking over, one thing Shannon said his Soldiers are trying to do is let the Iraqi people see that their elected officials and military personnel care about their well being.

"I try to put somewhat of an Iraqi face on it," Shannon said. "We are trying to get away from the Coalition doing everything for the Iraqi government and are trying to get the Iraqi army involved."

Shannon said the local government officials and soldiers are doing well, but they still have more to learn before Coalition Forces turn over operations to them.

"The Iraqi government is just not quite there yet," Shannon said. "They are making leaps and bounds every day. Eventually they will take care of their own infrastructure. Right now we are just trying to give them a little boost."



A young Iraqi girl solves a math problem on the chalkboard at an all-girls school near Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Balad, Iraq. Soldiers from Task Force 1-128 are helping to renovate the school.

Soldiers work to bring fresh drinking water to Iraq

Story, photo by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, Balad, Iraq — Turning on the kitchen sink to get a glass of clean water is not an option for Iraqis in villages near Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Balad, Iraq, but Task Force Liberty Soldiers here are helping to change that by bringing fresh water close to their front doors.

The area has palm trees, green grass, fresh crops and a variety of water sources to include canals, lakes and streams, but the villagers still don't have fresh drinking water. That is why Soldiers from Task Force 1-128 are installing water treatment facilities here to turn these non-purified water sources into drinkable water.

Task Force 1-128 is composed of Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, Wisconsin Army National Guard; Troop K, 3rd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Tennessee Army National Guard; and Soldiers from the 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, who are working with locals and government officials to improve the way of life in Iraq.

Clean water is something the Iraqi people need, said Sgt. 1st Class Jean Briggs, a civil affairs team sergeant with the 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, Danbury, Conn.

"Basically water is life, especially in a place like this," he said. "It's a necessity. It's definitely not just something people can do without and it has been our primary focus."

Briggs said they began the project by purchasing four water purification systems for the area and have been working with local Iraqis to run water lines to the homes.

"Task force commanders have been paying locals to lay down pipe from the water tanks and run it along the roads," Briggs said. "We install spigots in front of each house."

Providing clean water for the Iraqis is important Briggs said, but they hope someday the Iraqis will get purified running water in their homes.

"It is the best we can do right now," he said. "It is a quick fix until we get to point in this whole operation where we can install plumbing directly into the homes, but for them here, it is a big step just to have it at the front door."

Making a clean water lable to the Iraqis will lower their chance of getting waterborne illnesses, said Sgt. Desire Michaelian, a civil

affairs Soldier with the 426th Civil Affairs Battalion, and a native of Westhills, Calif.

"It gets rid of all the possibility of waterborne diseases," said Michaelian. "Not only that, but it is for crops as well. Eventually the irrigation (systems) will be using clean water as well, which will make the vegetables and fruits a lot healthier and better for you."

Completing these water projects will provide the Iraqi people with something that many people in the world take for granted, said Spc. Octavio Vila, a civil affairs Soldier with the 411th CA Bn., and a native of Westchester, N.Y.

"It is so simple to us, but to be able to bring clean water is a huge step as far as hopefully getting rid of disease and things like that," Vila said.

Briggs said the water filtration system is pretty basic. A hose runs from a water source like a canal, pond, lake or stream and brings it in through the system. The water then goes through six primary filters to remove any large sedimentation. Then it passes through a second system where chemicals are added to kill any bacteria and is pumped into a holding tank where it is stored until

it is used.

Helping the Iraqis to get systems to purify their water is important for the future of Iraq, Michaelian said.

"I believe it is because of the children," Michaelian said. "I have two children of my own and going around to these villages and seeing that they don't have the clean water, they don't have the electricity; they don't have running water in their house. It feels like something that we should do. We are fortunate enough to be Americans, why not spread a little bit of it to them."



Sergeant 1st Class Jean Briggs, a civil affairs team sergeant with the 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, Danbury, Conn., explains how a water treatment plant in a village near Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Balad, Iraq, purifies the water taken from a nearby canal.

Coalition Soldiers conducts security, train IA

Story, photo

by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, Balad, Iraq – The role of the Coalition Forces in Iraq has evolved into maintaining security and building a new Iraqi army capable of standing on its own.

Since December Task Force Liberty Soldiers of Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, have been keeping Coalition Forces and the Iraqi population safe while developing the new Iraqi army into an autonomous unit by patrolling the area west of Highway 1 one in the Task Force 1-128 area of operations.

Task Force 1-128 is comprised of Headquarters and Headquarters Company and Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, from the Wisconsin Army National Guard and Troop K, 3rd Battalion, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, from the Tennessee Army National Guard.

Company A has three main tasks in accomplishing its mission, according to Company A commander Capt. Clinton Ronnestrand.

"Our first tasking is to maintain the security in that area, gather human intelligence, and reports on criminal, terrorist and anti-Iraqi forces activity," said Ronnestrand, a native of Bloomer, Wis. "Our second tasking would be to seek out and maintain contact with spheres of influence;

sheiks, muftars, city mayor, city council, police chief, captain of the Iraqi army in Ad Dujayl. And our third tasking right away when we got here was to train and mentor Company D, 203rd Battalion of the Iraqi Army, that is headquartered in Ad Dujayl."

Company A, which also now works with Company B, 4th Battalion, Iraqi army, accomplishes its mission by combining all the taskings together and incorporating Iraqi army soldiers on every patrol.

"We've been integrating the Iraqi army more and more with each mission we do," said Sgt. 1st Class Dean Kowalke, 3rd Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment. "We

work them through the planning phases of the mission, precombat inspections and precombat checks, then take them out on the mission, watch how they do their job and when we finish the mission we have an after

action review going over the good stuff and the bad stuff so they can improve."

The Iraqi soldiers are even beginning to lead missions on their own.

"Right now they are to the point they are doing semi-independent patrols where they go out and do their own patrol, our trucks stay in the background and they run their own mission start to finish," said Sgt. 1st Class Brian Faltinson, 3rd Platoon Leader, Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment.

Five of eight platoons in Companies B and D have successfully conducted semi-independent patrols with few issues, building hope that they will be ready to take over operations on their own when Company A leaves in the fall.

The mission has been a challenge for the Soldiers of Company A. They are maintaining security and training a new army through a language barrier, but they have learned to accept their role and excel in it.

"Company A is doing outstanding, it's different than what we anticipated, that might have been one of the hardest adjustments," said Ronnestrand. "The mission is not quite what the training was focused on, but they've adjusted quickly. They're doing exactly what they need to do."

"This mission is not quite what the training was focused on, but they've adjusted quickly. They're doing exactly what they need to do."

**Capt. Clinton Ronnestrand
Commander
Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry**



Sergeant 1st Class Brian Faltinson, Company A, Task Force 1-128, talks to an Iraqi farmer during a patrol May 17 near Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, Balad, Iraq.

Task Force 1-128 makes a million

by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, Balad, Iraq – Task Force 1-128th Soldiers are reenlisting and raking in the cash.

The 89 Task Force 1-128 Soldiers who reenlisted in the Army National Guard from January to May have collectively earned more than \$1 million in bonus money.

Command Sgt. Maj. Karl Schotter, the command sergeant major of Task Force 1-128 and a native of River Falls, Wis., said the number of reenlistments while deployed shows the Soldiers' loyalty to their country.

"It means that we have dedicated Soldiers, and that they are here for the patriotism," Schotter said. "They are patriotic Soldiers."

Staff Sgt. Arne S. Thompson, retention noncommissioned officer for Task Force 1-128 and a native of Ridgeland, Wis., said the task force should have more than \$1.5 million in bonuses by the end of the deployment, but the bonus is not what his job is about.

"It is not really about money so much though," Thompson said. "I guess the approach I take is that I try to help people make informed decisions based on the premise that a Soldier making a well-informed decision usually makes a good decision for him or herself. A good decision for the Soldier is usually a good decision for the unit and a good decision for the country."

Thompson said currently the Army National Guard Soldiers are receiving bonuses of \$7,500 for three-year reenlistments and

\$15,000 for a six-year contract. He said the Soldiers who have not participated in the student loan repayment program or received the Montgomery G.I. Bill may also be eligible to receive one of those options.

Another goal Thompson said he has is to continue on with a state unit recruiting challenge he has given himself.

"Back in Wisconsin, we usually had better retention rates than the other units in the state and my personal goal was to maintain that despite being deployed, because I think the Guard has a lot of good things to offer. And while deployments can be rough times for families I think we are doing the right thing," Thompson said.

Deployment can be a tough time for families, but it is their support that allows these Soldiers to continue to do their jobs, Schotter said.

"I think our retention rate here is better than what the state average is at home," Schotter said. "This is tied in with the support of the families and our staff back in the state of Wisconsin. The families back home have been very supportive with care packages, positive letters and e-mails."

Thompson said he does have another goal regarding the number of reenlistment contracts he gets.

"I haven't reached 100 contracts yet, but we are working on it," he said. "The big goal is to help Soldiers make good decisions."

The Task Force 1-128 Soldiers are from 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, Wisconsin Army National Guard, and Troop K, 3rd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Tennessee Army National Guard.

Coalition hands base over to Iraqis

by Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta
42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

TIKRIT, IRAQ – Stepping forward, away from a brutal past is how some Iraqis viewed the recent activation of an Iraqi Army Brigade and the transfer of a Coalition Forces military facility to Iraqi Army forces.

Dibis Camp in Kirkuk Province, under Coalition Forces control since Iraq's liberation in 2003, was handed over to 1st Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Brigade on June 1, while the 3rd Brigade of the 4th Iraqi Army Division in As Sulaymaniyah Province was activated on June 2. Iraqi Army soldiers, government officials and citizens joined Coalition Forces in ceremonies celebrating the events.

"After the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, this is a new army," said 1st Lt. Tuhssin Raz Ismael, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade. "The soldiers have worked hard for freedom."

Raz recalled Saddam Hussein's chemical attacks, and his infamous 1988 Anfal military offensive, the genocide which killed off

an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 rural Kurds, according to a report by Globalsecurity.org.

"The memory of Saddam Hussein's brutality motivates us to form this new army for a democratic and federal Iraq," Raz said. All the soldiers of the brigade are volunteers, Raz noted.

"We all know that the dictator, Saddam Hussein used the former Iraqi army as a tool to oppress and destroy the Kurdish, Arab, Turkomen, Kildanian, and Assyrian rebels," Anwar said during the 3rd Brigade's activation ceremony. "But Operation Iraqi Freedom gave a chance, and created a circumstance in which the Iraqi Army re-organized itself in a new form. The army stepped onto a new stage with better quality and quantity forces with the cooperation of the Coalition Forces."

"I feel pretty good about being in the Army," he said. "I am a Kurdish officer in the Iraqi Army."

With the activation, 3rd Brigade is now the lead military security element in all of As Sulaymaniyah Province. The activation ceremony and festival took place against a

mountainous backdrop where thousands of Iraqi soldiers marched before Iraqi military and government leaders. Others displayed the brigade's military prowess with tactical patrol and urban maneuver demonstrations.

"The main duty of this brigade is to defend this province from terrorists, insurgents and anything that might harm the public," said Raz.

"Today, a new Iraqi army is formed, and it looks like the freedom of Iraq is going forward," said Pvt. Omed Muhammad Ali, a 3rd Brigade medic. He said an organized, sophisticated army is a sign of a nation's progress, and said 3rd Brigade is an example of it. He cited the events precision marching, music, military demonstrations and equipment as an example of the brigade's organization.

"You can see it reveal itself in this festival," Muhammad said enthusiastically. The 3rd Brigade soldiers are tireless, he added, and respond well to training.

"They have persistence and soul," he said. "They take and follow orders well. They have volunteered to sacrifice themselves."

Coalition, IA patrol streets of Iraq

Task Force 1-128 Soldiers conduct joint patrol with Iraqi army

Story, photo by Sgt. Jennifer J. Eidson
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

AD DUJAYL, Iraq – Iraqi army soldiers in Ad Dujayl are moving closer in the direction of taking over military operations in Iraq.

The Soldiers of Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, are helping the Iraqi soldiers reach that goal through various combat missions.

Task Force 1-128 is composed of Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, Wisconsin Army National Guard, and Troop K, 3rd Squadron, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Tennessee Army National Guard, who are actively working to train and prepare the Iraqi army to take control of military operations in Iraq.

Specialist William Fisher, an infantryman with 1st Platoon, Company A, said the Iraqi soldiers are learning to conduct patrols and raids as well as set up traffic control points.

"I am very glad to see the Iraqis working with us," Fisher said. "They are taking a bigger role, and within the next month or two they should be doing a lot of work on their own."

Iraqi soldiers are not only learning a lot by conducting missions with the Task Force Liberty Soldiers, but they bring an aspect to the patrol that the Soldiers of Task Force 1-128 can't, Fisher said.

"The Iraqis help us out a lot when we do mounted patrols (and) some dismounted patrols through the villages," Fisher said. "They know the people, they know where things are and they also know the temperament of the people, whether they like us or don't like us. They also do very well with security and helping locate (unexploded ordnance)."

Fisher said when Iraqi soldiers join them on their patrols the local nationals are not as reluctant to provide the Coalition Soldiers

with information.

"The Iraqi people themselves are a lot more willing to talk when we have Iraqi soldiers with us," he said. "They feel more comfortable. The Iraqis are able to obtain more information than we would with just an interpreter. A lot of times, some of the Iraqis feel that we are intimidating, and when we bring Iraqis with us they feel more at ease."

The Iraqi soldiers will not be conducting these missions with the Coalition Soldiers much longer, said 2nd Lt. Andrew Lorsung,

platoon leader from 1st Platoon, Company A. Soon the Iraqi army will take the lead on military operations in the area.

"I personally think the Iraqi army will be ready to take over shortly, within several months," Lorsung said. "Most platoon leaders have already taken out a patrol ... where they are actually in charge and they performed very well. It is just a matter of fine tuning."

A squad leader from 1st Platoon, Company B, Iraqi army, agreed that the Iraqi

army soldiers are well prepared due to the help of the Coalition Soldiers.

"I think the Iraq army is ready," said the Iraqi soldier. "Right now we are going to be training more on the (Coalition base) every month. We are patrolling with Coalition Forces and we know all of this area, and we know all of the people in this area. We are ready to support the people of Iraq. Coalition Forces trained us really hard and taught us more on the map and the patrols. The Iraqi army right now is much better than before."

Fisher said it is important for the soldiers to develop combat skills so they can not only protect their country, but their families as well.

"They need to be able to fend for themselves when we leave in order for democracy to work in Iraq," Fisher said. "I believe they need to be able to take care of themselves and not allow insurgents to pressure them and intimidate them. A lot of them have family members that are in jeopardy with insurgents knowing their location and they need to be proficient in skills that are able to counteract against these insurgents."

Fisher said he has enjoyed working with the Iraqis and believes they will be able to fight insurgency when the Coalition Soldiers leave Iraq.



Second Lt. Andrew Lorsung, platoon leader, Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, talks to an Iraqi army squad leader (left), with the help of a translator (center), before going out on a joint patrol May 11 in Ad Dujayl, Iraq.

"The (Iraqi army) group here is very good and enthusiastic about what they are doing. They will be a good army here in Ad Dujayl."

Spc. William Fisher
Infantryman
Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment

Pecking for UXOs

Soldiers dig through chicken farm in search of unexploded ordnance

Story, photos by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, Balad, Iraq – Task Force Liberty Soldiers worked to clear a cache of more than 2,500 57mm and larger rounds of unexploded ordnance near Balad, Iraq, May 10-14.

Eight combat engineers from 3rd Battalion, 69th Armored Regiment, stationed at Forward Operating Base Brassfield-Mora were assigned to assist Task Force 1-128 at Forward Operating Base O'Ryan in finding and destroying the UXOs from fields at the Tarmiyah Poultry Farm, one of countless caches that litter the Iraqi countryside.

"Our overall mission was to come out collect up and destroy as many UXOs as we could find," said Staff Sgt. Dennis Kradel, Company C, 3-69. "I'd say we've been fairly successful."

The UXOs in the fields which surround the farm were supposedly left behind by the former Iraqi army.

"Rumor has it, (the fields) used to be an air defense and artillery site back in Saddam's days and they just buried all their stuff when they left," said Capt. Paul Shannon, Commander, Troop K, 3rd Battalion, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, whose Soldiers patrol the area the farm is on.

The engineers collected the UXOs off of the ground surface and from underground, using mine detectors, shovels and an M-9 Armored Combat Earth Mover, and then moved them to a centralized location for the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Detachment to destroy with a controlled detonation daily, explained Sgt. Kevin Hanson, Company C, 3-69.

"We've got to get rid of them because the anti-Iraqi forces can come in here anytime they want," said Hanson, a native of Maryville, Tenn. "If they can find this stuff they'll use it as (improvised explosive devices) on the roadsides. They



Specialist Gary Morrissey uses a mine detector to search for buried unexploded ordnance while Pvt. Mark Hughes waits to dig in a field at the Tarmiyah Poultry Farm near Balad, Iraq, May 13.



A member of the 184th Ordnance Battalion lays down plastic explosives on top of a row of 57mm rounds in order to destroy a cache of unexploded ordnance May 13.

can use the 57mm rounds as improvised grenades, and they can use them to harm troops, so we're basically stopping that from happening or at least trying to slow them down."

This isn't the first time that UXOs have been removed from the fields at the poultry farm as a previous unit had performed some excavation of UXOs.

"They thought it was all cleaned out and there wasn't anymore there, said Shannon, a Clarksville, Tenn. native. "We've been going through patrolling it every so often and in so doing guys have been finding stuff, so we had some engineers come down, do an assessment, and they said 'yeah there's a lot of stuff here.'"

Now that the engineers worked on the field Shannon's men will continue to patrol the area in case there are more UXOs.

"Primarily it's more for taking it out of the insurgents' hands than it is anything else," said Shannon, "but it is also a safety concern for the populace to clean up all these UXOs around Iraq."

Iraq takes step toward independence

3rd BCT turns CMOC and Blue Dome over to Iraqi Security Forces

**Story and photos
by Spc. Natalie Loucks
3rd BCT Public Affairs**

BAQUBA, Iraq -- The Diyala Province took one more step toward self reliance when the Provincial Government Center and a large portion of the Civil Military Operations Compound, both in downtown Baquba, were turned over to the Diyala government.

Responsibility of the Provincial Government Center, nicknamed the "Blue Dome," where the provincial council operates, was given to Diyala, May 1, in a peaceful transition.

On May 5, Diyala Governor Ra'ad Hameed Juwad and Deputy Governor Auwf Rahumi Majeed moved their offices out of the Blue Dome and into the Binayat Al-Muhafadha Al-Qadima building. The Binayat building had long been home to the governor's office, but was almost completely destroyed during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In the courtyard of the building, where a formal ceremony was held, Governor Ra'ad kissed and hoisted the Iraqi flag before cutting the blue ribbon attached to the door that led into his new office building.

In a speech, Col. Steven Salazar, commander of Task Force Liberty's 3rd Brigade Combat Team, congratulated Diyala's citizens, government officials, and security forces on their movement to freedom.

"We are honored to walk with you hand in hand on this road to peace and prosperity," Salazar said. "But soon, you will not need our hand and you will walk alone. We will be proud to watch you continue down that road as your honorable friends."

"We are giving the rightful government house back to the Iraqi people," said Maj. Michael Charlebois, 3rd Brigade's civil-military officer.

Major Ed House, Operations Officer for the 3rd BCT, said this transfer is a step in proving the independence of the Diyala Province and Iraq.

"They are willing to fight the insurgency on their own," he said. "They are getting better everyday and this gives them the opportunity to prove themselves."

Although Coalition Forces have stepped back, House said US combat power is still close enough to provide quick reaction if additional force is required.

The majority of Iraqi police and the Iraqi soliders have stopped wearing black masks over their faces concealing their identity, House said.

"This shows the insurgents that the people (of Iraq) are tired of the insurgency and they are now capable of defending themselves," he said.

The ISF have been training and conducting missions alongside coalition forces and House believes they are progressing everyday.

"Our guys take pride in their counterpart units," House said. "They take pride in how they perform in combat operations."

"We are on the way to freedom," Salazar said. "everyday we take another step towards peace and prosperity."



Governor Ra'ad Rasheed Hameed of the Diyala Province kisses the flag of Iraq before hoisting up the flag pole at the Civil Military Operations Center compound May 5 in downtown Baquba Iraq.



Children from a local school in Baquba, Iraq, perform for Diyala Province Governor Ra'ad Rasheed Hameed, Col. Steven Salazar, commander of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Liberty and guests May 5 at the Civil Military Operations Center compound.

CROWS keeps patrolling Soldiers safe

Story, photos

by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, BALAD, Iraq —One problem affecting the Soldiers of Troop K, Task Force 1-128 is the safety of their gunners during patrols.

The Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station, a remotely operated weapon mounted on top of a vehicle and controlled from a command center inside the vehicle offers a solution as they patrol the main supply routes and alternate supply routes providing security and looking for improvised explosive devices in their area of operations.

"The Primary purpose of the CROWS is to get the gunner out of the turret where he is exposed to enemy fire and fragmentation and get him down inside the vehicle for protection," said Sgt. 1st Class Sam Cottrell, CROWS Fielding Center noncommissioned officer in charge.

The gunner now sits safely inside an armored vehicle, looks at a computer screen and controls the weapon with the use of a joystick.

"In addition CROWS gives them a powerful color day camera, a Generation 2 forward-looking infrared camera and a laser range finder," said Cottrell.

All the gunner has to do now is tell the computer where to fire the weapon and the computer does the rest.

"Once a target's been identified the computer builds a ballistic solution, taking into account distance, elevation and the type of



Specialist Kendall Hargis, Troop K, 3rd Battalion, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, clears the Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station after a patrol at Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, near Balad Iraq, May 15.

weapon and puts the rounds on the target," said Kendall Hargis, CROWS operator, Troop K, 3rd Battalion, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

The M-2 .50-caliber machine gun, M-240B medium machine gun, MK-19 automatic grenade launcher and the M-249 squad automatic weapon can all be mounted on the CROWS.

Centrally fielded and serviced from Logistical Support Area Anaconda, the CROWS was out to units in Iraq in April.

Several hundred will be fielded in the next year and a half, according to Cottrell.

Troop K received the 10th unit in Iraq, sent four gunners through the two-week certification course and now uses the CROWS daily during combat patrols of the MSRs and ASRs.

"The CROWS system is an excellent tool," said Sgt. 1st Class Craig Bailey, Company C, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment. "The advantages are obviously its optics, zoom and thermal capabilities. It's able to see things a lot farther in advance. It's excellent to have a thermal system mounted right on the vehicle to use at night or in daytime."

"The CROWS is great for the MSR patrols because with the FLIR it sees things that are out of place," said Hargis. "Even spotting IEDs in the road prior to coming up to them, but I think the most rewarding thing I can do catch some of these guys laying the IEDs."

Task Force 1-128 is comprised of Headquarters and Headquarters Company and Company A, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry Regiment, from the Wisconsin Army National Guard and Troop K, 3rd Battalion, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, from the Tennessee Army National Guard.



Specialist Kendall Hargis, Troop K, 3rd Battalion, 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment, operates the Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station from inside the safety of a vehicle on Main Supply Route Tampa, May 15.

Kiowas support ground troops with quick response

Story by Sgt. Blake Kent

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MCKENZIE, Iraq – Keeping Kiowas in the air has proven a useful tactic for the 17th Cavalry, allowing them to react quickly to situations as they are happening.

Kiowa teams from the 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry, Task Force Liberty, have been able to cut their reaction time to events by running 24-hour operations that keep at least two OH-58D Kiowa Warriors in the air at all times.

“Because we keep them in the air, they are always able to react,” said Col. Mark Burke of Hamburg, NY., commander of the 42nd Aviation Brigade.

“There are a few techniques for doing this,” said. Lt. Col. Frank M. Muth of Columbia, Md., commander of the 1-17th Cav. “You can use a quick reaction force team that is standing by here on the FOB waiting to react, or you can have what we call a first responder.”

Where it would take at least 12 minutes to get a QRF team in the air, having aircraft in the air at all times allows for air support to be on site within less time, Muth said.

“Being in the air allows you to have situational awareness and be already fully integrated into the fight right from when you receive the radio call,” Muth said.

In April the teams were able to react to an event near Lake Thar Thar, to the southwest of Samarra, and a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack near Baquba. Both events proved the value of the Kiowas through their ability to gain situational awareness and relay that information to the Soldiers on the ground, and their ability to provide rocket and 50-caliber machinegun fire to disrupt the attacks of terrorist forces.

In the Baquba attack, the Kiowa team reacted to the site of the SVBIED explosion only to find the explosion was only the beginning of a terrorist attack against an Iraqi army compound.

“The AIF were infiltrating inside the compound, so we suppressed their advance,” CW3 Edwin L. Annis of Portland, Ore., a pilot with Troop C, 1st Squadron and air-mission commander on the day of the event.

The team saw terrorist moving into the IA compound, and had to visually distinguish between them and the IA soldiers, and then react quickly with suppressive fire to stop the terrorist advance on the compound with no communication with IA troops on the ground.

A TF Liberty quick-reaction ground team was already en route to the attack, but had not yet arrived. The Kiowa team was in contact with the arriving troops, keeping them abreast of the situation as it developed.

“We started taking fire from two large weapons systems and rocket fire, but stayed in the area to develop the situation for the soldiers on the ground,” Capt. Ashley F. Thames of Manchester, Tenn., a pilot with Troop C, 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment.

“We were close enough to hear them shooting at us through our intercom mikes,” said CW2 Scott H. Stradley of Tehachapi, Calif., a pilot with Troop C. “The larger tracer fire we were taking was



Photo by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey/22nd MPAD

Lieutenant Col. Frank M. Muth, Capt. Ashley F. Thames, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Edwin L. Annis and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Scott H. Stradley, all of 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry, stand in formation after receiving the Air Medal.

like softballs.”

“I think the two weapons systems were probably meant for our ground guys coming in response to the VBIED, but we were able to draw the fire away from them and on to us,” Thames said.

With the information provided by the Kiowa team, the ground troops were able to move into the area of the attack and secure it without putting themselves in the way of the planned AIF ambush.

“We try and give the best picture that we can to the leaders on the ground as the situation develops, so that they can best move their men around the battlefield,” Stradley said.

“We can influence the ground space of the battle, but can’t control it,” Annis said. “That is where you have to have the ground troops.”

The soldiers on the ground gave credit for their safety and ability to secure the area to the Kiowa team.

“I read the after-action report, and the ground troops gave direct credit to the Kiowa Warriors,” said Staff Sgt. Michael Touchet of St. Martinville, La., a crew chief with Troop C.

“Without a doubt, we were able to save lives,” Thames said. “The AIF weren’t expecting us and we completely disrupted their operations.”

The training the pilots receive and the care and attention the aircraft receive from the crew chiefs, is what allows the Kiowa teams to react quickly, proficiently and safely while on their missions, said all of the team members.

“We train to fight the battle everyday – practice our skills on the ranges and talk about how we are going to engage the targets,” Annis said.

Annis, Stradley, Thames and Muth all received the Air Medal with “V” Device for their actions.

“I’ll be proud to receive this award, it is a real honor,” Stradley said. “Initially I came here thinking finding IEDs and mortar tubes was going to be about it, without having much shooting, but I am glad we were in the right place at the right time to help those guys out.”

Crew chiefs work overtime on aircraft maintenance

Story, photo by Sgt. Blake Kent
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MCKENZIE, Iraq – When every hour of flight means four hours of maintenance, flying more than 2,500 hours can add up to a lot of maintenance.

For the crew chiefs of 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, Task Force Liberty, these maintenance requirements are a 24-hour operation.

The squadron runs 24-hour operations, keeping two aircraft in the sky at all times that are able to react quickly in place of a quick-reaction team, meaning the aircraft must undergo a quick turn around from flight-time to maintenance and back to flight-time.

The crew chiefs, with the help of civilian contractors, make all the scheduled maintenance and repairs for the squadron's OH-58D Kiowa Warriors. The unique thing about the squadron's method is that it meets the quick turn-around, keeping all the aircraft mission-ready with a running maintenance cycle.

"We have broken down our inspections to where we do pieces of it throughout the year, keeping the aircraft mission-ready all the time," said Staff Sgt. Michael Touchet of St. Martinville, La., crew chief for Troop C, 1-17th Cav. "That is what makes this aircraft so effective."

The squadron has flown 2,538 hours in the past month, clocking more flight time in a month than the squadron would often see in a whole year.

"With the amount of use they are getting. We are seeing a lot of repair needs that we've just never seen before," said Sgt. Edward Cabassa of Poca, W.Va., crew chief for Troop C. "Overall, I feel our maintenance is better here because the soldiers are getting so much experience."

Unlike garrison, the crew chiefs are able to focus their total attention towards maintaining the aircraft.

The distracters aren't here, like in garrison, said Sgt. David Christman of Delhi, La., crew chief for Troop C. The crew chiefs' sole job here is working on their helicopters.

"Engine services in garrison could take us a day and a half," Christman said, "but here we can do it in three hours with half the people."

With the constant amount of work to be done to meet the mis-

sion requirements, the crew chiefs, like the pilots, must be careful not to exhaust themselves.

Each troop is on a 12-hour mission cycle, and work in eight hour shifts, to ensure that lack of rest does not hinder the safety of the mission.

"There is no such thing as rushing maintenance," Christman said.



Specialist Johnathan Hart of Longview, Texas, Headquarters, Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry, Task Force Liberty, prepares a rocket to arm a OH-58 Kiowa Warrior before it goes on patrol, at the forward arming refuel point, Forward Operating Base McKenzie, Iraq.

"The pilots have to trust that the crew chiefs know what they are doing and are getting it right, and we have to know when we are pushing ourselves too much and could be making mistakes," Christman said. "You have to know when to walk away and take a break because if you make a mistake it could be someone's life."

There are so many important little pieces on this aircraft that have to be right for the aircraft to fly safely, Cabassa said. There isn't room for mistakes.

"It's a fine balance," said Lt. Col. Frank M. Muth of Columbia, Md., commander, 1-17th Cav. "We don't want to over-tax the pilots, the maintenance teams or the aircraft. This is a marathon and not a sprint."

The maintenance teams must also deal with the elements and environment that being deployed to the desert of Iraq has given them.

Everything here is a little bit harder with the sand and heat," Cabassa said. "At home we work out of hangars in the cool. Here, when it gets to be summer we will have to even be careful where we set down our tools because of the heat."

Despite the long hours and tedious work, the Soldiers still maintain their team unity and high morale.

"I love my job; I love being a crew chief, and I love working around the helicopters," Cabassa said. "I know my hands are going to be black all the time from the work, but that is why I chose this job."

"Everyone is stepping up to the plate," Muth said. "We have come together here with not only the right players, but the best players. We are a team, a unit and a family."

"It's one thing we like about our unit, the camaraderie," said Spc. Wesley Majure of Forrest, Miss., Troop C. "I just don't imagine any other units being as closely knit as we are."

It's all family, everyone has their role, Cabassa said. The pilots fly, but there is always some maintenance that needs to be done on the aircraft, and that the crew chiefs have to do.

Midnight at the Oasis

Story, photos

by Sgt. Matthew Acosta

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Tikrit, Iraq – In the Iraqi desert, nomads and wanderers may seek an oasis for refreshment and a break from the harsh environment, but at Forward Operating Base Speicher, the Soldiers seek an oasis of another kind.

Soldiers gather at the “Oasis,” to showcase their musical talents and to take a break from the daily rigors of living in a combat zone.

“It gives people the chance to not be in Iraq for just the 2-3 hours (people spend) here relaxing,” said Spc. Belinsky Tous-saint, chaplain’s assistant, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 150th Aviation Regiment, Task Force Liberty. “We do whatever we can for people to give them that oasis from the everyday.”

Every Friday night at the club, Soldiers can take advantage of free snacks, cold drinks, hot food and live musical entertainment.

“Its an escape from whatever is going through your mind out here, like going to a club back home,” said Spc. Evan Lawley,

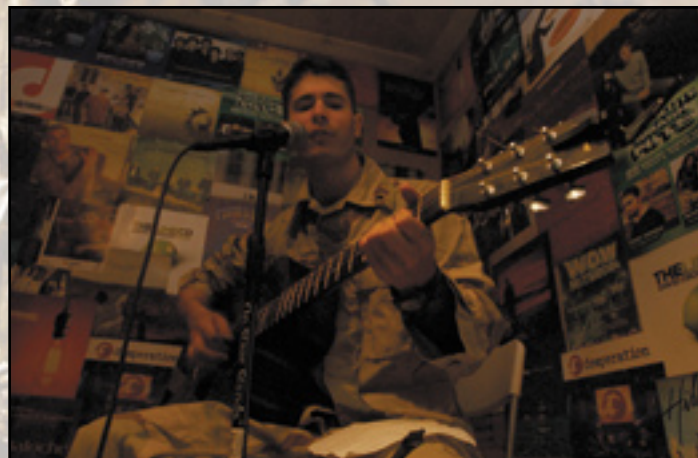
aviation maintenance technician, 628th Aviation Support Battalion, Task Force Liberty. “There isn’t much to escape to here but music gives me focus; you can always find time for music.”

Besides the musical lounge, Soldiers can take a break outside in the patio area where they can gather around tables and talk while sipping on banana and strawberry smoothies (offered outside) or by playing a relaxing game of chess.

“There’s a lot of stress out here and people’s lives depend on you to do your job,” Lawley said. “Sometimes you just need to leave everything behind and cut loose and relax.”

Toussaint said the performers are mostly Soldiers but civilian contractors are also welcome to sing, play instruments, or read poetry; “what ever it takes to leave Iraq behind for a few hours.”

“Whatever they (performers) want to do, they just let me know so I can introduce them onstage,” said Toussaint. “Many times people will just start jamming with an instrument and then be joined by whomever



Specialist Evan Lawley, aviation maintenance technician, 628th Aviation Support Battalion, Task Force Liberty, shows off his musical talent to the crowd at the Oasis, a club sponsored by the chaplains’s office at Forward Operating Base Speicher.

walks on, and they all just get into it, even the crowd.”

Toussaint said they usually have a variety of music ranging from jazz and blues to soft rock, and the instruments vary from an electric guitar and keyboard to a saxophone and violin, whatever they bring.

“Some say they base their whole week around being here for just a few hours,” Toussaint said. “Although the music is better than it used to be, it’s not about that, it’s more about the atmosphere.”

So, if you’re ever wandering around Speicher on a Friday night, take a break from your routine and let your guard down and bring your spirits up in an oasis of friendliness.



Task Force Liberty Soldiers take a break from the daily rigors of life in a combat zone by playing music at the Oasis.



Soldiers and civilians get their groove on at the “Oasis.” The club on Forward Operating Base Speicher is open to both Soldier and civilian talent.

Precision strikes pay off

Story, photo by Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta
42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SUMMERALL, Bayji, Iraq –The “Scorpion” is what Capt. Hussein Ali Suleman, commander of Company C, 1st Iraqi Army Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Division, calls himself – a nickname that illustrates what he and Task Force Dragoon Commander Lt. Col. Philip Logan are using to defeat insurgents here – precision strikes.

“The mark of a professional Soldier is precision strikes,” Logan said. “You eliminate the threat without endangering the lives of innocent civilians around you.”

“That sums up (Hussein’s) vision for operations,” said Sgt. 1st Class Richard McGovern, Company A, 1st Battalion, 111th Infantry, which is part of Task Force Dragoon. “A scorpion is a small animal that wields a lot of power. When it uses its power, it does so with precision and effectiveness.”

That precision is borne out in the continuous, intelligence-driven operations – patrols, raids, cordon and search missions, observation posts and traffic control points – which the Soldiers of Task Force Dragoon and Company C, 1st Battalion, Iraqi army, execute. These missions recently paid off in the defeat of wanted Iraqi terrorist Nabil Badriyah Al Nasiri, who surrendered to the 1st Iraqi Army Battalion May 2, and the May 4 capture of 22 insurgents suspected of launching rockets at Coalition Forces here.

“Intelligence drives maneuver” is a saying repeated at all levels of command, Logan said, and one that Task Force Dragoon follows.

“Sometimes you have to fight for intelligence,” Logan said. “You have to conduct patrols, searches and raids aggressively. You have to do that while fighting off (improvised explosive device) attacks and indirect fire attacks.”

This “homegrown intel,” as Logan called it, was compiled with intelligence from other sources and enabled Task Force Dragoon and the Iraqi soldiers to target and capture Badriyah’s bodyguards in a series of raids in Bayji. This denied Badriyah the ability to maneuver and led to his surrender, Logan said.

“Power is nothing without wisdom,” Hussein said. “If I use my power wisely, I will be able to do good things and draw good men to our cause.”

“It goes back to shaping the battlefield that accounts for our successes this week,” Logan said.

For the Soldiers, this means a high operations tempo.

“We’ve got Soldiers out 24 hours a day, doing mounted reconnaissance, dismounted and mounted patrols, convoy logistic patrols for vehicle parts and supplies, counter-IED ambushes and counter-sniper ambushes,” said Logan. “It’s an enormous undertaking.”

Unlike the precision strikes of Task Force Dragoon, insurgent attacks do not discriminate. Iraqis are suffering the brunt of IEDs’

destructive power and collateral damage, he said.

“People are beginning to realize that anti-Iraqi forces are killing Iraqis,” Logan said.

Task Force Dragoon faced a different threat before the Iraqi elections, Logan said, consisting of roadside bombs, suicide car bombings, direct fire, indirect fire and “sustained, persistent contact with the enemy.” In the weeks leading up to the election, Logan joked, he was “prepared for Bayji to become Stalingrad on the Tigris.”



A soldier from Company B, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry, patrols the streets of Bayji. Patrols and other operations conducted by Task Force Dragoon units contributed to the surrender of wanted Iraqi terrorist Nabil Badriyah Al Nasiri.

“In the days and weeks following the election, we saw a marked change in community leaders,” he said. “They realized there is a new government, and that they wouldn’t have a voice if they didn’t participate.”

In addition to engaging the enemy, Task Force Dragoon and Company C are engaging the citizens of Iraq with civil affairs operations designed to help Iraqis get back on their feet, and repair the area’s damaged infrastructure.

Task Force Dragoon leaders also meet with area religious, political, government, and tribal leaders regularly and listen to their needs, and try to balance those needs with projects which will help Iraqis get back on their feet.

But, Logan conceded, the fight goes on.

“When you capture someone like Nabil Badriyah, you’ve got about five minutes to celebrate,” Logan said. “Then you’ve got to get out there and start patrolling and fighting for intelligence again.”

'5-25' campaign increases IED awareness

MNC-I Public Affairs

Improvised explosive devices are the No. 1 killers of America's sons and daughters serving in Iraq, and the Joint IED Defeat Task Force at Camp Victory has kicked off an information campaign May 25 in an effort to increase IED awareness and save lives.

The "5-and-25" campaign, as it is called, is designed to increase IED awareness and reduce the effectiveness of the mountain of makeshift bombs being produced by insurgents. Officials say the deceptive devices account for more than half of the Coalition deaths that have occurred since the start of the Iraq war in March 2003.

Efforts to date have reduced the IED casualty rate by more than 45 percent during the period of April 2004 through February 2005 – but that is not seen as enough.

"IEDs are our number one killers here," said Eric Eglund, who works at the Iraq headquarters of Joint IED Defeat Task Force at Camp Victory. The task force is responsible for developing innovative ways to rid the country of IEDs.

The deadly devices are considered a highly effective means of killing people because they can quickly be set up anywhere and be set to blow at any time. They have been disguised as virtually everything from tree trunks and dead animals to bicycles and pregnant women. Royal Australian Air Force Group Capt. David Stockdale, deputy chair of the IED Working Group at Multi-National Corps-Iraq, said there is no limit to what insurgents will use for IEDs.

Stockdale, who serves as the equivalent of a colonel in the U.S. Air Force, has been actively working the issue of IEDs and their effects since arriving in Iraq a few months ago.

"The IED is one of the most dangerous threats to Coalition Forces," Stockdale said. "To mitigate their effects, we wanted to put together an information campaign that would make the IED reaction drill a normal part of daily activities for the Coalition Forces."

Eglund said several different counter-IED organizations were already delivering good messages and possible solutions out there, but with no real emphasis or impact to the troops who needed it the most. "It wasn't as good as it could be. Some channels just naturally don't flow as well as others," he said.

The working group, deputy-chaired by Stockdale, represents a cross-section of Coalition Forces formed as a result of this issue.

The group's solution for getting vital information to the forces required three objectives: first, ensure information gets to those troops who need it most; second, develop an effective counter-IED organization that can take the fight to the enemy; third, produce pinpointed products from one organization which can be approved

and delivered in a timely fashion.

"IEDs can be any time, anywhere, any shape; the trends change," Stockdale said. "The aim is to get the message to the field. It's dangerous out there."

To push information to the troops anywhere and any time trends change, the working group assembled a small team of designers to brainstorm effective ways to get the word out. The first idea also seemed the most obvious one to start the campaign -- military publications.

Task force members agreed they needed some common thread to tie all the messages together – like a logo.

"The [designers] suggested we needed to have [a logo] that everybody recognizes," said Lt. Col. Theodore Martin, field team leader, Joint IED Defeat Task Force-Iraq. "5-and-25" became that logo. "The most important thing Coalition Forces can accomplish is situational awareness when they're outside the wire; it is the most basic [tactic] that you have to master."

"This seemed appropriate because 5-and-25 means awareness," said Master Sgt. William Johnson, one of three designers. "5-and-25 means checking the area around you for a threat. Every time you stop outside a secure area, you always should check. Not checking could get you killed."

More specifically, 5-and-25 requires that troops look for anything out of the ordinary within a five-meter radius of their vehicles, according to counter-IED policies. If halted long enough, forces should then exit their vehicles and conduct a 25-meter sweep around their position. Halting for as little as four minutes can prove costly.

"Evidence shows that [many] Soldiers, who are at a short halt (for as little as) four to five minutes, are getting hit by IEDs near

their vehicles," Martin said.

Besides the recognizable 5-and-25 logo getting printed in military publications, the campaign will also produce messages to other outlets that could potentially reach as far away as the Department of Defense and Afghanistan.

"This time it's (newspaper ads), next time it will be commercials on TV and radio," Martin said. "After that, we're looking at expanding it. The sky is the limit."

Included in the laundry list of ideas are bumper stickers, flash screens on Web sites, stress balls and even Frisbees, according to Martin.

Whatever the means, Stockdale said the message must stay focused with one purpose: to save lives.

"There's no predicting exactly where, when or how you're going to meet an IED when you're driving around," Stockdale said. "Practicing those basic methods and regularly using them significantly enhances your chances of survival."



Task Force Konohiki mentors Iraqi army soldiers

Story by Sgt. Daniel W. Bailey

22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE O'RYAN, Balad, Iraq – None of the Soldiers of Task Force Konohiki realized how challenging and rewarding performing the job of a military transition team would be.

"Nobody was ever made aware of or even heard about 'MiTT' until they were told to report," said Command Sgt. Maj. Lanky Morrill, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 29th Brigade Combat Team, and a resident of Kaneohe, Hawaii.

Since February the 40 Soldiers that came from units assigned to the 29th Brigade Combat Team to comprise TF Konohiki are building up the 4th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 4th Division, of the Iraqi army at Forward Operating Base O'Ryan, near Balad, Iraq, to become capable of functioning on its own.

"Our job is to help the Iraqi army stand up, specifically with the battalion staff cells, to define what the cell does and to put together an officer and noncommissioned officer cadre of people who are capable of and willing to do that job for the new Iraqi army," said Morrill. "We do this by meeting with them daily which establishes a personal rapport that has been tremendously rewarding, and allows us to gauge their strengths and weaknesses."

Task Force Konohiki also works with Task Force 1-128 by supervising and assisting in the training of 4th Battalion soldiers at the squad and platoon levels at FOB O'Ryan and on patrols here.

"We're working with 1-128 right now, and they have a scheduled plan of things to do, such as squad drills, moving to contact, using their weapons better, zeroing their weapons, shooting at targets, just basic soldier skills," said Staff Sgt. Henry Choy, Task Force Konohiki. "They are also assisting and improving those basic soldier skills by performing security check points, active patrols and searching homes."

The Iraqi army is learning to be more self sufficient.

"They're beginning to learn how to be more soldier-like," said Staff Sgt. Taasulisia Tilo, TF Konohiki. "The discipline was hard at first, but being a soldier is serious business. Now we're trying to teach them command and control, to take responsibility of their soldiers, which their picking up. The Iraqi NCOs are pretty much taking responsibility now during the training."

The Soldiers of TF Konohiki have realized there is a sense of pride and accomplishment that comes with training the Iraqi army.

"Every day is a different day as it has its own challenges in a way," said Choy a native of Waianae, Hawaii. "But it's a better, more meaningful challenge. I think we have more meaning, or feeling of accomplishment than most soldiers here."

Konohiki Soldiers have bonded together to meet their challenges head on as a group.

"We try and eat dinner together every night as a family," said Morrill. "In Hawaii it's called 'ohana' where you try and cultivate the family atmosphere in everything you do. It really helps people bond and realize their problems may not be so bad or someone might have similar problems."

When the 4th Battalion assumes control of the TF 1-128 area of operations it will have Konohiki to thank for getting it there.

"What an honor it is to be able to represent America here in Iraq," said Morrill. "These are tremendously professional people who just want to take their country back and who appreciate the support of the Americans helping them do it."

Never Forget

The Soldiers serving in the Multinational Division North Central, Iraq are an important part of the Task Force Liberty team. We will always remember our fallen heroes.

Staff Sgt. Todd Olson

1st Bn. 128th Inf. Reg.
Samarra, Iraq
Dec. 27

Cpl. Aleina Ramirezgonzalez

3rd BTB, 1st BCT
Tikrit, Iraq
April 15

Sgt. 1st Class Mark C. Warren

3rd Bn., 116th Armor
FOB Warrior, Iraq
Jan. 31

Pfc. Steven F. Sirko

1st Bn., 30th Inf. Regt.
Muqadadiyah, Iraq
April 17

Staff Sgt. Steven Bayow

2nd Bn., 7th Inf. Regt.
Bayji, Iraq
Feb. 4

Spc. David L. Rice

1st Battery, 7th FA
Muqadadiyah, Iraq
April 26

Sgt. Daniel Torres

2nd Bn., 7th Inf. Regt.
Bayji, Iraq
Feb. 4

Sgt. Timothy C. Kiser

116th Engineers
Hawija, Iraq
April 28

Sgt. Rene Knox Jr.

5th Bn., 7th Cav. Regt.
Balad, Iraq
Feb. 7

Sgt. Gary A. Eckert Jr.

983rd En., En. Bde.
Samarra, Iraq
May 8

Sgt. Chad Lake

5th Bn., 7th Cav. Regt.
Balad, Iraq
Feb. 7

Spc. Steven R. Givens

1st Bn. 15th Inf. Regt.
Samarra, Iraq
May 8

Sgt. 1st Class David Salie

2nd Bn., 69th Armor
Bagubah, Iraq
Feb. 14

Sgt. Andrew R. Jodon

3rd Bn., 69th Armor
Samarra, Iraq
May 12

Pfc. David J. Brangman

3rd Bn., 69th Armor
Patrol Base Uvanni, Iraq
Feb. 13

Pfc. Travis W. Anderson

2nd Bn., 7th Inf., Regt.
Bayji, Iraq
May 13

Spc. Justin B. Carter

1st Bn., 15th Inf. Regt.
FOB McKenzie, Iraq
Feb. 16

Pfc. Wesley R. Riggs

2nd Bn., 7th Inf. Regt.
Tikrit, Iraq
May 17

Spc. Jacob Palmatier

1st Bn., 30th Inf. Regt.
Qaryat, Iraq
Feb. 24

Sgt. Carl J. Morgain

1st Bn., 112th Inf.
Kadasia, Iraq
May 22

Spc. Adriana Salem

3rd Forward Support Bn.
FOB Remagen, Iraq
Feb. 24

Sgt. John B. Ogburn III

3rd Bn., 116th Armor
Kirkuk, Iraq
May 22

Sgt. Paul W. Thomason III

2nd Sqd., 278th Cav.
Kirkuk, Iraq
March 20

Sgt. Alfred B. Siler

278th RSS, 278th RCT
Tuz, Iraq
May 25

Sgt. 1st Class

Robbie D. McNary

1st Bn., 163rd Armor
Hawijah, Iraq
March 31

Chief Warrant Officer 4

Matthew S. Lourey

1st Bn., 17th Cav.
Buhriz, Iraq
May 27

Sgt. 1st Class

Stephen C. Kennedy

1st Sqd., 278th Cav.
Balad Ruz, Iraq
April 4

Chief Warrant Officer 2

Joshua M. Scott

1st Bn., 17th Cav.
Buhriz, Iraq
May 27

Staff Sgt. Kevin D. Davis

Co. G, 82nd Cav.
Hawijah, Iraq
April 8

Cpl. Randall D. Preusse

Co. A, 386th Eng. Bn.
Davilla, Texas
June 4



Chaplain (1st Lt.) David Malone, 642nd Division Aviation Support Battalion, Task Force Liberty, plays music at the Oasis at Forward Operating Base Speicher, Tikrit, Iraq, to get a brake from the daily rigors of a combat environment. (Photo by Sgt. Matthew Acosta/22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)